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 "Show of Shows" "Welcome Danger" "Dynamite"
 "Cohens and Kellys in Scotland" "The Virginian"

GOOD WORK ACCOMPLISHED ON THE FERGUSON HIGHWAY

Hon. Wm. Finlayson, Minister of Lands and Forests, Tells of the Progress Made and of the Various Problems Dealt With.

Retread on the Ferguson Highway is the subject of an interesting article by Hon. William Finlayson, Minister of Lands and Forests, published in the Canadian Engineer. The article states, in part:

Of the many examples of the new low-cost pavement surface known as "retread," aggregating several thousand miles in the United States, but as yet less than a hundred miles in Ontario, it is doubtful whether its construction in any locality has attracted wider interest than have the completed portions of the Ferguson Highway between Severn and Bracebridge, Ont.

Engineers, contractors, road officials and motorists have studied its construction and its subsequent behavior with growing interest. Some who possess an intimate knowledge of rigorous climate, the uninviting geological and topographical conditions, and the multiplying traffic burdens attending this particular stretch of northern road, but who were unimpressed by the limited funds available for the work, were inclined to favour the selection of a more costly type to ensure the greatest possible factor of security. Others, impressed by its simplicity of construction and its remarkably low cost, recognized in retread a means of providing many times the mileage of durable and reliable wearing surface that normal annual road appropriations have been capable of meeting in the past.

Others, again, attracted by the minimum of inconvenience experienced by the motoring public during its construction, which was at the approach of the peak of the 1929 tourist movement, and realizing that a summer-traffic burden of 3,000 to 5,000 vehicles per day had left no impress of fatigue on its superior riding surface, reserved their comments pending a survey of the ravages of the severe Northern winter and changeable spring. Some there assuredly were who, cognizant that the retread had been laid over new diversions and swampy section, where the drainage is and all that a road engineer might desire, were prepared to defend the vastly improved traffic conditions between Gravenhurst and Severn against occasional surface failures. These, they feared, nevertheless, might prove in the public eye to be disparaging to the suitability of this particular type of pavement for Northern work, as frost boils are prevalent annually in adjoining sections of natural-surface roads.

Geographically, the Ferguson Highway is the most unique thoroughfare in Ontario. It amply merits the appellation, "trunk" by which it and other important roads in Northern Ontario are designated. It is the only central highway between Northern and Southern Ontario. Older Ontario, with its industrial, financial and social stability so vital to the consistent development of the newer North, comprises less than one-eighth of the area of the entire Province. Northern Ontario, with its 350,000 square miles of opportunities in mining, lumbering, agriculture, industry and recreational pursuits, is attractive to the discriminating investors of this and other nations. Of the millions invested in the varied activities of Northern Ontario, the origin of many industrial realities can be traced to the mighty army of annual visitors, who while in search of rest and recreation, became inspired with the industrial opportunities there presented. At the same time the tourist industry developed into one of Ontario's greatest revenue-producers. So was augmented the urgency of Northern Ontario road problems.

The Department of Northern Development, whose predominating function is indicated in its name, has in hand among other activities in connection with the opening of the vast natural resources of the North, the problem of providing transportation for some 300,000 people throughout an area of approximately 350,000 square miles. This undertaking involves the establishment of new roads as the frontiers recede, and the upkeep and improvements of existing roads. Since Northern development was placed upon an organized basis in 1912, some \$40,000,000 have been expended, chiefly for roads and bridges. The strides made by numerous industries are indicated by the necessary outlay during 1929 of nearly

\$5,000,000 for road improvement alone. The road system of Northern Ontario comprises some 10,000 miles of settlers' roads, and 4,000 miles of trunk roads. Of this mileage about 7,500 miles, or over half, has been provided with gravel or a superior type of surface. This is a decidedly favourable showing, despite the limited extent of available funds.

There are many points of striking dissimilarity between the general sub-base conditions of the average road in Southern Ontario and those to be found in the section under discussion. Adequate drainage is not always feasible, and in many instances, is an unsolved problem. The textural composition of the varieties of soils encountered, the extent of their plasticity, degree of shrinkage and swelling, and their behavior in the presence of excess moisture, are characteristics which govern the possible displacement of a pavement, horizontally and vertically in any location, and warrant a thorough laboratory investigation when expensive pavements are under consideration.

The extreme variations to be found in comparatively short sections of northern roadbeds, where rock frequently alternates with sand, loam or muskeg, prompted an exhaustive study of the characteristics of many pavement types. The survey traversed the entire pavement field, and included analyses of first costs, suitability of local materials, the detour problem, the utilization of existing roadbeds, rapidity of construction, probable cost of maintenance and ease of repair.

In an endeavour to strike a proper balance between available funds and maximum returns, and having regard for the peculiar local conditions to be contended with and the necessity of improving the greatest possible mileage compatible with sound road-building practice, the attention of the department focused upon the retread type. Investigations were then made of various retread pavements that had seen considerable service in the United States. These gave promise of meeting satisfactorily the difficulties peculiar to the Ferguson Highway, and it was decided to give the retread surface a trial, despite the fact that the undertaking was somewhat of a departure from previous road-building practice in Ontario, as retread had not passed the experimental stage in that Province.

To sum up the factors which had to do with the selection of this type for the Muskoka section of the Ferguson Highway, the following characteristics of retread are worthy of note:

1. The utilization of the existing roadbed without molesting its compacted stability or sacrificing road metal already in place.
2. The avoidance of detours and the minimized inconvenience to traffic using the road during construction.
3. The alternative of using local or commercial aggregate, or both, as desired.
4. The speed with which the pavement top may be constructed, without congestion of equipment or materials to impede passing traffic.
5. The mileage which a reasonable road-building appropriation may take care of conveniently without "bunching" expenditure or distributing other requisites.
6. The ease and economy of subsequent maintenance and repair.

There is also evident in retread a desirable resiliency of surface, in itself a characteristic quite favourable to the seasonal conditions to be endured, particularly the liability of frost disturbances in the spring. The non-skid texture of the wearing surface is likewise a factor of no small importance on the grades and curves peculiar to Northern roads. Moreover, its dustlessness, evident durability and remarkably smooth riding qualities met with favour in the study of low-cost types to fulfil the requirements of a road called upon to bear a large volume of tourist traffic.

During the past year so much attention has been given to retread that the general principles governing its construction are widely known. While no particular specification, to the best of the writer's knowledge, has been designated as a standard, there are few points in which any existing specification differs from another in the factors which characterize the general method of construction. Accordingly, the department did not hold the contractors to any series of specific details. A logical result of careful observation and skilful management of contingencies as the work progressed, is that the general store of information respecting the behavior of retread, both during and after construction has been generously enlarged. Experience developed some practical features in construction operations which should be of considerable interest to road builders, and which might well be considered worthy of being embodied in subsequent specifications.

Briefly, retread is a member of the family of bituminous concrete wearing courses comprising a composite mixture of graded aggregate and bitumen. It differs from its associates chiefly in the methods by which the ingredients are mixed. The simplicity of construction and the paucity of equipment play an outstanding part in its extremely low cost, a factor which has brought forth for retread the popular colloquialism, "the poor man's pavement."

In the work under discussion, one noteworthy departure from general retreading principles resulted from a detailed examination of base conditions. Sudbury Star:—Turks never take Turkish baths; Irish stew is no peculiar to Ireland; there is no rice in rice paper; camel's hair brushes are made from squirrel fur; sealing wax contains no wax, and catgut fiddle strings are really made from sheep's gut—so there isn't so much in a name after all.

COMMENTING ON THE IDEA OF CHEAP HYDRO FOR NORTH

Necessary to Have all the Facts Before Any Logical and Valuable Criticism May be Made in the Matter.

In the matter of hydro electric power for the North there seems to be a very general opinion that it is a good thing to have the Ontario Hydro Commission add this area to the territory now served by the commission. For a great many years the Timmins board of trade made very anxious effort to induce the Hydro Electric Commission to come in here, but all efforts were in vain. Apparently the commission had the idea that mining camps were not permanent enough and so the Porcupine camp at least was ignored. Now that the pioneer work has all been accomplished by private interests the commission is evidently coming in to this territory. At the present time there is a disposition to be critical. One Toronto newspaper has been objecting to the terms on which the Hydro Electric Commission will operate here and they are not favourable.

In this connection The Northern Miner says:— "The Toronto Star editorially chides The Northern Miner for an alleged misunderstanding of its attitude toward the acquisition by the Ontario Hydro Commission of cheap power for the Sudbury area. It now admits, after it has been told so, that the price of \$13.50 is a fair one. But it complains that the information which The Northern Miner secured, covering details of the cost and selling price of the power, was "inside" stuff.

"Apparently the friendly Star commented editorially on Mr. Ferguson's deal with the Abitibi people without having secured the facts. There was nothing secret about the arrangement. Editorial enterprise would have secured all the details by simply applying for them, as we did. Both Mr. Ferguson and Abitibi officials were quite willing to outline the deal in all its phases, we found.

"The Star, however, remains insistent that certain angles should be more clearly defined. The matter of financial responsibility appears to disturb it. In this direction it is possible to throw a beam of light. Northern Ontario is not in the position of its organized eastern and southern neighbouring districts, in that the bulk of its natural resources are in the hands of the Crown. The undeveloped water powers, the unsold timber tracts and the potential mineral lands of the North are pledged every time the Province of Ontario borrows money.

"When Premier Ferguson grasps an opportunity to buy cheap power to assist in the enrichment of the North, by process of permitting a private corporation to develop an idle power source, he is acting in the interest of the province as a whole. In this particular instance he has committed the province to the direct expenditure of \$3,500,000 and to a contract involving the purchase from the Abitibi people of 100,000 horsepower annually, for a period of 40 years. The capital outlay is insignificant, in consideration of the returns which are visible and contracted for. The Government, through the Hydro, has not entered a one-sided arrangement whereby it buys a certain amount of power without contracting in advance for its sale. The responsibility of the contracting parties is substantial. International Nickel is one of the largest industries in Canada and it would probably puzzle The Star to find a single customer or a group of them, for Hydro power with the same amount of financial stability. We would be quite happy to be able to predict for The Star the same profitable life span that International Nickel is assured by virtue of its ore deposits, its plants and its markets.

"In naming International Nickel as a responsible contracting party we are not intimating that this is the sole customer for the new power. Treadwell Yukon is another sound company which proposes to raise its production from 250 to 2,000 tons daily; Falconbridge Nickel is waiting for more power at this time. The town of Sudbury is growing faster than any other town in Canada, and its power requirements are rapidly outstripping the available supply. The argument of lack of market for the development falls down heavily.

"Furthermore, the bringing of additional power to the Sudbury area, from a point 200 miles farther north, is a mere stepping stone to a larger development, with ultimate objective the distribution of current from presently idle sources to the south manufacturing centres and the linking up of present systems with new sources of supply. Furthermore, the Abitibi development is already hitched up with the exploiting of the lignite fields, a provincial asset of great potential importance.

"We are naturally hesitant in approaching a conclusion that The Star would even wish to consider the Hydro as in politics, and therefore ascribe to its editorial comment on the new power deal a certain anxiety based on lack of information respecting the actual details, which are, fortunately, now in its possession."

North Bay Nugget:—An air pilot at Ottawa has lost his license because of stunting at too low an altitude over a residential district. A few pilots of motor cars in North Bay also do too much stunting on the roadways, and should be deprived of their licenses before they do damage. An ounce of prevention properly applied might save a tragedy.

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